

# MIRRORING THE SOCIO-CULTURAL ETHOS OF ASSAMESE LIFE: A CRITICAL READING WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ASSAMESE MARRIAGE SONGS

LOTIKA SAIKIA

Dibrugarh University, Assam, India

## ABSTRACT

*Folk literature has come to be identified as one of the priceless resources of an indigenous community. Folk literature not only reflects but also carries special characteristics peculiar to a respective indigenous community which bears its witness since the time it has displayed its existence. In this context, Assamese Marriage songs are one type of Folk literature which falls into this mentioned description. These folk songs are called Marriage songs as they are sung or played only on occasions of marriage ceremony. It is noteworthy to mention here that there is no any specific writer of the Marriage songs. Rather it is the reflection of collective emotions as well as the collective consciousness of Assamese people surfacing as or in the form of oral literature. Like oral literature, these Marriage songs are transmitted from generation to generation. However, as these marriage songs which is used to be oral has found its written form in the recent times. So we definitely get to understand how Assamese Marriage songs' covers a broad area of study and can be relevant as a significant area of research analysis. Therefore, an attempt has been made to discover the different facets of Assamese Marriage songs which forms the basic objective of this paper titled "Mirroring the socio-cultural Ethos of Assamese life: A Critical Reading with Special Reference to Assamese Marriage Songs". The study also aims to find how Assamese Marriage songs reflect and represent Assamese socio-cultural life. One important point to be mentioned here is that Marriage songs are widely in use by various indigenous communities of Assam. But keeping in relevance to the present analysis, we just try to cover and discuss the current or prevalent Marriage songs within the sphere of Assamese language and aspects.*

**KEYWORD:** Assamese Marriage Songs, Socio-Cultural Life, Reflection, Ethos & Critical Reading

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## INTRODUCTION

Folk literature is one of the most fabulous creations of society. It carries within it every aspect of one's community reflecting about its social system, beliefs and customs, habits, traditions etc. It also includes myths, songs, epics, stories, and beliefs which are passed down orally through generation to generation. However, the authors of this Folk literature are usually unknown or unidentifiable.

Assam is very rich in its Folk Literature. There are three specific types of Folk Literature which is predominant in Assamese Language and they are: a) Folk song, b) Proverbs, and c) Story. Yet Marriage Songs constitutes another significant dimension of Folk songs in particular and Folk literature in general. These songs are not only for entertainment purposes but also about the emotion of a girl who leaves her birth place and natal home to a new home and family which is addressed as her husband's home. It is during the marriage ceremony, various Marriage Songs are played or sung time to time by the women of the collective community with different lyrics or

songs.

### Objective

The primary objective of this paper is to find out how the text of Assamese Marriage songs reflects about Assamese traditional socio-cultural life.

### Methodology

This research paper follows both descriptive method and analytical method.

## DISCUSSIONS

Literature covers various aspects of a socio-cultural community. Literature speaks about the social system, beliefs and customs, culture and living standard of a community which hints at its broad nature and dimension. However in this context, the scope of this paper is too small. Therefore we shall try to discuss the few aspects of the Assamese Community through the literary aspect of Marriage Songs.

### Assamese Traditional Social System

If we look into the social structure of Assamese society, we would find that there is a concept of a joint - family system which exists since earliest time. Even though this concept of joint-family structure has changed in present times yet in Assamese Tradition, an ideal family would always mean or consists of Father-in-Law, Mother-in-Law, Sister, Brother, etc. The sustenance of values like love, faith, affections, respect and understanding are considered as the key elements of any ideal family or 'Adarsh Family' in the domain of Assamese society. Therefore, this nature of family values or social system gets its recognition in Assamese marriage songs as well. To cite as an instance,

*Marar holoni Hahurok paba*

*Deutaror holoni Hohuruk paba*

Deutaror Swardha khini hohuruk diba

*Vayerar holoni Deworak paba*

Nijor vaitir dore morom koriba.

In Assamese society married women have to veil /cover/ purdah their face in front of elderly people for the sake of tradition. If she wants to come out in front of the elder people then she must veil her face, and if she reluctant to do this then it is treated as an act of dishonor to that elderly person. There is also a tradition wherein the Mother-in-Law also has to veil her face in front of the Son-in-Law. This idea has been described in the following marriage song:

Juwaik Adoriboloi

Hahurek Ahise

Murote Uroni Loi

### Beliefs and Customs

Again to consider the Assamese traditional beliefs and customs, we must know that each and every indigenous community has its own set of beliefs regarding certain things. These are the part of their day-to-day life activity. They did

these things with love and interest. Assamese society is not different from these beliefs and customs. They maintained various beliefs and customs and accordingly the Marriage songs which are discussed here also form an important part of their beliefs and customs. To take another example in this regard:

Ulai Aaha Aaideo Matit Mangol Sai

Gonoke Gonita Kore Khyon Sari Jai

In Assamese society, people believe Peacock as a symbol of Goodwill bird. Therefore, there is a practice of fanning the groom on the marriage day with a fan prepared via the wings of peacock bird. Amongst these, there are also various traditions which are followed by the Assamese community like the rituals of exchanging *Temi-Kotari* by the bride and groom which is followed by another event called *Khuba-khubi*, which is a function organised on the third day of marriage. There is again another tradition which relates to Marriage is JURUN ceremony, which is observed before the Marriage ceremony takes place. During this particular occasion, many things are offered to the family household of the bride by the groom's family. This is done out of the belief that this practice would work as a blessing for the newly-wed couple to possess or bear children in their conjugal life. Moreover, in order to increase the fertility of the newly married woman, there is a ritual of looking into *Vorun* tree immediately after taking bath. This can be explained in the following lines:

Ga Dhui Aaideoe Koloike nasaba aei Ram

Vorun Birihoi saba hee

Vorun Birihoi hate nologaba aei Ram

Olopote Jononi hoba hee.

## **Instruments**

Apart from all this, Assamese traditional instruments have its indigenous elements. Assamese community is rich not only in its use but also in its practices from time to time. In modern view, we can distinguish into four parts of these traditional instruments, such as-

- Ghono Baidya
- Susir Baidya
- Aaonodho Baidya
- Toto Baidya

Materials including bamboo, wood, variety of metals (such as gold, silver, brass, bronze, iron etc) and also with the help of mud, they prepare some very special instruments which has global recognitions. Examples of some indigenously made instruments are Dhool, Khul, Muruli, Pepa, Doba, Sarega, Honkho etc. Interestingly, these instruments are also used or have shown its influences in Marriage songs. One such example is mentioned below:

Dhooltsapor mari ulal Ramchandra

Raijoloji Nomoskara kori.

*Pepa Murulie* baje ghone ghone

Ramchandra Jygoi jai

*Sarendar* baboloi kune hikai gole

Kune aani dile huna.

### Folk Art

Another facet of Folk literature is Folk Art which is continuing to show its richness till today. Folk Art reflects community strengths of creativity, activeness, artistic mind. In this prospect, Assamese community is not lacking behind. For instance, Assam has world famous *Kahor Silpo* (meaning bell-metal industry and its related art and craft). Assamese Weavers or Handlooms weaving their dreams in pieces of clothes which is also appreciated globally. Along with these, they also make other precious things like Koloh, Saki, Bahor bisoni, etc. with the help of these materials. These ideas have found its expression in Marriage songs in the following manner

*Bahore Bisoni*

Naniba Hahu Aai

Naniba *Kahore Kahi*

Kharu Loi Ahisu

Etula Sunere

Aru Loi Ahisu Moni

Rupore temate

Sendur loi ahisu

Ekhon *Hati Dator Foni*

### Dresses

Now, to deal with Assamese traditional dresses of Assamese women, we may hear of famous Mekhela, Sador, Riha etc. As there are specific clothes for women, similarly there are respective dresses for Men such as Suriya, Seleng, Gamusa and so on. Assamese traditional dresses are known by globally for its uniqueness, softness, and its fabric of silk. Out of all, Muga silk, Pat muga and Mejangkori are most globally known. Especially Muga silk is World famous and 98% of the Muga silk is available within the state of Assam only. However, these rich heritages of Assamese traditional dresses are to be found in the dictions of Assamese Marriage songs:

Kokal Sai Aanisu

*Kingkapor Mekhela*

Ga Sai Aanisu Sula

Aanise *Riha*

Aagot *Guti Bosa*

Sador Aanise Pari Bosa

*Pator Suriya* Aati Pindhile Kokalot

Muthite Lukale jen Botahot Hale

## **Ornaments**

Different types ornament forms another crucial asset of Assamese community. Like other communities, Assamese community has its own various types of ornaments. As we know, ornaments are one of the most beautiful elements of Assamese community. In addition to this, the shape of these ornaments speaks about the natural beauty of Assam. Shapes of ornaments decorated with beautiful flowers, birds, trees, and also designs including moon-shape designed, or dhool-shaped ornaments are quite popular. Assamese women wear different types of ornament in different part of their body. During ancient times, men also used to wear some ornaments but now-a-days this tradition remains enclosed in the chapters of books only. To mention some names, there is Golpota, Satsori, Mogardan, Koriya, Lonker, Lokapar, Muthi haru, Kundol, Jethinejiya Anguthi; then some pearl-shaped structures such as Junbiri, Dhoolbiri, Motormoni, Khilikha Moni, Mota moni etc are examples of traditional ornaments of Assamese community. In traditional Marriage Songs of Assamese community there are mentions about these mentioned ornaments:

*Kanot minakora dingit golpota*

*Hatot muthikharu lage*

*Jethipotiya sorai nejiya*

*Angulit anguthi lage.*

*Ram gunodhor*

*Dingir satsori*

*Rame khohai nile tani*

*Saibabe harile ram gunomoni*

*Kornor kundol*

*Rame korile pon.*

## **Food Culture**

Now coming to Food Culture of Assam, we must know that Assam is an agro-based economy. As an agricultural economy, rice is the main food for its indigenous people. This is so because Paddy is easily available and cultivable and most of the land is used for Paddy cultivation. Assamese community makes various foods from paddy or rice like Sira, Khandoh, Pithaguri, Aakhoi, Hurum, etc. Then again special Pitha (items prepared from rice powder) like Til Pitha, Tel Pitha, Ghila Pitha, Hesha Pitha are the another important part of Assamese community. Items of Pitha or the cakes prepared from rice powder are the main dishes in the Bihu festival of Assam. We found about various food in Assamese Marriage songs as mentioned below:

*Aakhoi-Saul-Sira Pitha Poromanno*

*Oi Ram bhag bota kori khao*

*Suagmoni Dhaan Bani Khundu Pithaguri*

*Moromote khundi thoisu Moinadhaanr Sira*

Geographical location of Assam is different from others. It has river based location where there is easy availability of various types of fish. Fish is also another part of Assamese food culture. In Assamese Marriage songs we found about fish as like:

*Hahe Masor hake*

*Pura masor pitika*

*Magur masor khorikat dia.*

## CONCLUSIONS

Thus, from the above discussion, it can be concluded that Folk culture represents a community identity. It reflects their richness, uniqueness, lifestyle, belief and customs. Through this paper, it has been shown that how Marriage Songs can mirror or replicate the Assamese Socio-cultural life. Moreover, it has been understood via this research analysis that how Marriage songs may serve as an effective agency or medium in order to understand or accumulate knowledge about Assamese community. Thus, marriage songs are unique to its own nature and therefore its preservation can be seen as the need of the hour in this rapid pace of globalization.

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